

## **SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1.1 WEST GATEWAY REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

The West Gateway Redevelopment project area comprises nine sites on seven blocks in Downtown Long Beach. The three blocks abutting the north side of Broadway between Maine Avenue and Chestnut Avenue are planned to be entirely redeveloped while the three blocks abutting the north side of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street are planned to have individual parcels redeveloped. The West Gateway Area was one of several planned residential areas identified in the Downtown Long Beach Strategic Action Plan which would be a key element in the revitalization goals of the Strategic Action Plan.

The Redevelopment Agency's comprehensive vision for the Greater Downtown allows specific projects to be incorporated into the planning strategy and furthers the Agency's short and long-term objectives. The Long Beach West Gateway Urban Design Plan represents an important piece of the development process. West Gateway is primarily a mix of single-family homes and low-rise apartments. Existing multi-family residential properties with inadequate on-site parking and few site amenities have prompted the Redevelopment Agency to focus on increasing and improving public open space and developing new quality residential projects on West Gateway to buffer the lower-density areas to the north from the more intensive commercial and mixed-use areas to the south. The West Gateway District extends from the Cesar Chavez Park to the west, along Golden Avenue east to Chestnut and further to Pacific Avenue, connecting CitiPlace and the East Village. 4th Street marks the northern boundary of the planning area, although only specific parcels between 4th Street and 3rd Street are currently within the Redevelopment Agency's development program. Broadway defines the southern boundary of the District. These boundaries serve as a guide to distinguish specific components of the Greater Downtown and are not intended to be definitive separations. In fact, the role of the Landscape Master Plan is to facilitate the connectivity of the neighborhoods adjacent to West Gateway to the Greater Downtown. West Gateway's location adjacent to Cesar Chavez Park and the I-710 Freeway marks the importance of West Gateway's position as a major development component and entry statement to the City and the Greater Downtown. Broadway is one of the main entries into the City from the Freeway through Cesar Chavez Park. As such, it embodies the spirit of the City of Long Beach's reputation as a dynamic urban environment distinct from Ocean Boulevard's character but no less an important promenade showcasing residential, commercial and mixed-use areas.

#### **1.1.2 EIR CONTENTS AND ITS PURPOSE**

This brief overview is intended to acquaint the reader with the proposed West Gateway Project. This focused environmental impact report (EIR) has been prepared by the City of Long Beach to evaluate the environmental consequences, mitigation measures and project alternatives associated with the proposed West Gateway Project.

This EIR will be considered in the decision-making process, together with other information presented on the project, such as the public proceedings on the project. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15200, this EIR will serve the following purposes of review:

- a. Sharing expertise.
- b. Disclosing agency analyses.
- c. Checking for accuracy.
- d. Detecting omissions.
- e. Discovering public concerns.
- f. Soliciting counter proposals.

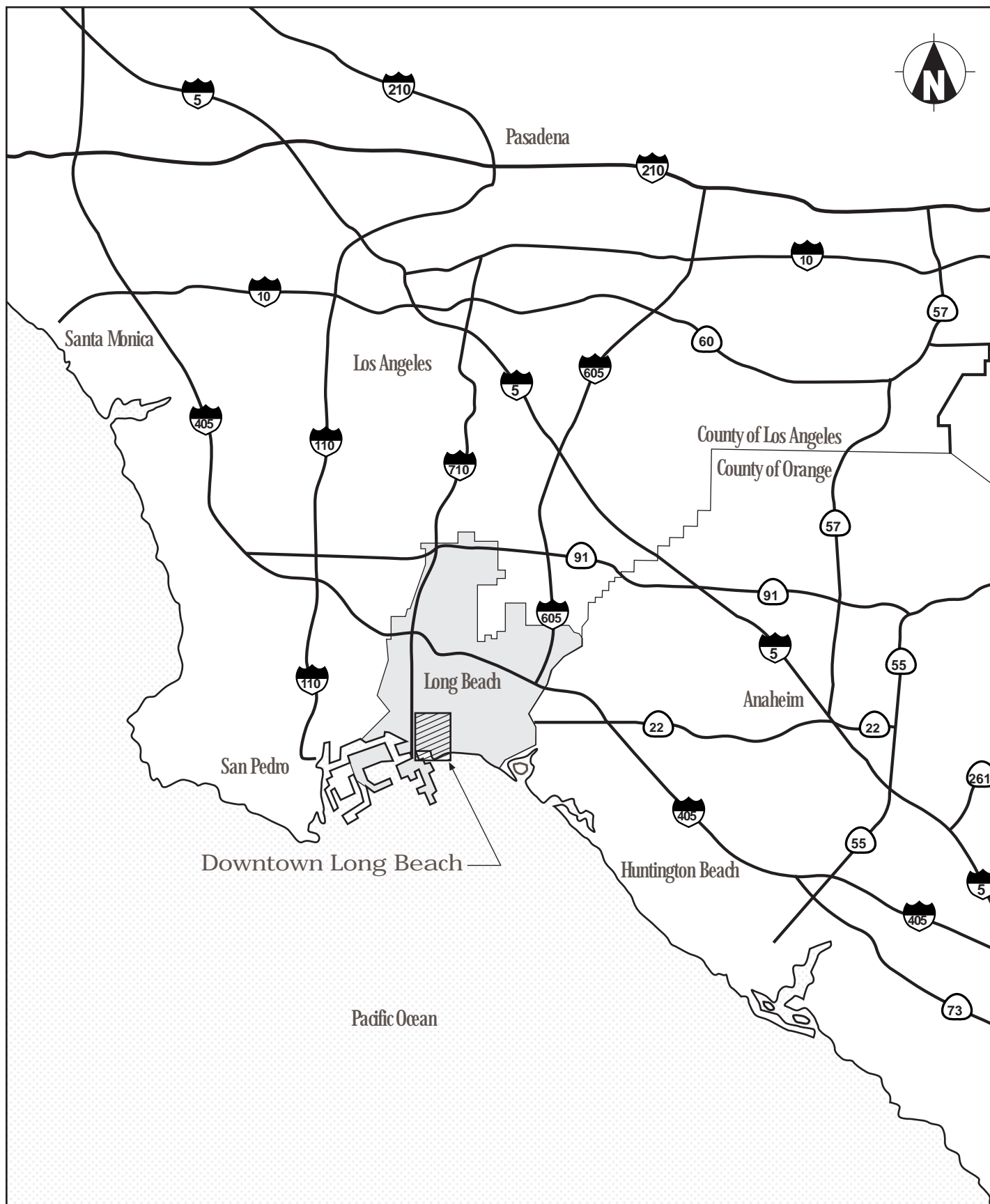
This EIR has been prepared to address the construction and operational level of detail. The EIR identifies and discusses each significant impact that was identified in the initial study, mitigation measures, and project alternatives with relationship to this project, using its best efforts to forecast, while incorporating requests by the public and responsible/trustee agencies for consideration of specific measures and/or alternatives. The EIR is intended to provide sufficient information for the public and the decision-makers to construct an array of alternatives, even beyond those included in Section 9 (Project Alternatives) of this EIR.

The City of Long Beach prepared an Initial Study (IS) of all the topics on the Environmental Analysis Checklist. The IS was distributed with the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for public information purposes. If an issue was determined to have no impact, be less than significant or less than significant with mitigation in the IS, it has not been analyzed in this EIR. The results of the topics in the IS that were settled are summarized in Section 3.0 (Effects Found Not to Be Significant).

## **1.2 PROJECT LOCATION**

The proposed project is generally located in Southern California in the City of Long Beach in Los Angeles County. The project involves 9 land parcels in a seven block area of downtown redevelopment areas of Long Beach. The redevelopment sites encompass approximately 11.66 acres within Redevelopment Areas in downtown Long Beach. The project area is located approximately .3 miles west of the Long Beach (SR 710) Freeway and approximately 2.32 miles west of the Harbor (SR 110) Freeway and approximately 3.57 miles south of the San Diego Freeway (I-405, see Figure 1-1, Regional Location Map). More specifically, the project area is bounded by West Broadway on the south, Maine Avenue on the west, West 4<sup>th</sup> Street on the north and Chestnut Avenue on the east (see Figure 1-2, Vicinity Map).

Surrounding land uses in the immediate project area include a variety of residential, commercial and parks/open space uses. Cesar Chavez Park is located immediately west of the project area. The Los Angeles River is west of the project area, west of Cesar Chavez Park. The Long Beach City Hall, Municipal Court and the Chamber of Commerce are located to the south of the project area. In addition, the Long Beach Police Department and Fire Station No.1 (temporarily relocated to Parcel 10 until renovation of the existing fire station is complete is complete) are located directly south of the project area.



Source: Long Beach Redevelopment Agency and Downtown Long Beach Associates (9/03).

Figure 1-1  
Regional Map





Source: Long Beach Redevelopment Agency and Downtown Long Beach Associates (9/03).

Figure 1-2  
Vicinity Map

### 1.3 BACKGROUND

#### 1.3.1 REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE CENTRAL LONG BEACH REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Long Beach City Council adopted the Redevelopment Plan for the Central Long Beach Redevelopment Project (Redevelopment Plan) on March 6, 2001. That action was a continuation of a series of actions contemplated regarding the redevelopment of Central Long Beach. All of the West Gateway Parcels, except Parcel 11, are in the Central Long Beach Redevelopment Plan. The Introduction of the Redevelopment Plan states:

“This Plan provides the Agency with powers, duties, and obligations to implement and further the program generally formulated in this Plan for the redevelopment, rehabilitation, and revitalization of the area within the Project Area. Because of the long-term nature of this Plan and the need to retain in the Agency flexibility to respond to market and economic conditions, property owner and developer interests, and opportunities from time to time presented for redevelopment, this Plan does not present a precise plan or establish specific projects for the redevelopment, rehabilitation, and revitalization of any area within the Project Area, nor does the Plan present specific proposals in an attempt to solve or alleviate the concerns and problems of the community relating to the Project Area. Instead, this Plan presents a process and a basic framework within which specific plans will be presented, specific projects will be established, and specific solutions will be proposed and by which tools are provided to the Agency to fashion, develop, and proceed with such specific plans, project, and solutions.

A fundamental purpose of this Plan is to improve the quality of life for residents and business enterprises within the Project Area. That purpose and the purposes of the Community Redevelopment Law will be attained through, and the major goals of the Plan are:

- A. The elimination of blighting influences and the correction of environmental deficiencies in the Project Area, including, among others, buildings in which it is unsafe or unhealthy for persons to live or work, small and irregular lots, obsolete and aged building types, shifting uses or vacancies, incompatible and uneconomic land uses, substandard alleys, and inadequate or deteriorated public improvements, facilities, and utilities.
- B. The assembly of land into parcels suitable for modern, integrated development with improved pedestrian and vehicular circulation in the Project Area.
- C. The replanning, redesign, and development of portions of the Project Area which are stagnant or improperly utilized.
- D. The provision of opportunities for participation by owners and tenants in the revitalization of their properties.

- E. The strengthening of retail and other commercial functions in the Project Area.
- F. The strengthening of the economic base of the Project Area and the community by the installation of needed site improvements to stimulate new residential, commercial, and light industrial expansion, employment, and social and economic growth.
- G. The provision of adequate land for parking and open spaces.
- H. The establishment and implementation of performance criteria to assure high site design standards and environmental quality and other design elements which provide unity and integrity to the entire Project.
- I. The expansion, improvement, and preservation of the community's supply of housing, particularly housing available to low- and moderate-income persons and families.
- J. The preservation of governmentally-designated historic structures."

### 1.3.2 OTHER RELEVANT PLANS

Parcel 11 (Lyon) is part of the Downtown Redevelopment Project, adopted in June 1975, and is not part the Central Redevelopment Project. This plan has very similar goals as the Central Redevelopment Project pertaining to this parcel. The Downtown Redevelopment Project has been amended several times.

### 1.3.3 CURRENT STATUS OF DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Since the adoption of the Downtown and Central Redevelopment plans, several actions relating to the West Gateway Project Area have occurred:

1. New district regulations amending design standards for PD-30 were adopted by the Long Beach City Council on November 4, 2003;
2. The *Strategy for Development, Greater Downtown Long Beach, California (Field Paoli Architects, May 2000)* was formulated as a proactive strategy for three Redevelopment Project areas including the West Gateway area; and
3. The *Downtown Long Beach Strategic Action Plan, Downtown Long Beach Associates and the City of Long Beach (Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc. (July 2000)* was formulated as an implementation program and schedule for the strategies identified in the Strategy for Development. This action plan was developed by a 31-member ad hoc task force created for the oversight of the redevelopment of Downtown Long Beach.

The West Gateway area is included in all three of these documents. The project objectives for this project are derived from goals and objectives identified in these documents.

### 1.3.4 PREVIOUS ACTIONS IN THE PROJECT AREA

#### Jamboree Parcel (Parcel 1)

On January 26, 2004, the City of Long Beach approved a plan for affordable housing located at the corner of Golden Avenue and West Third Street known as Parcel 1 of the West Gateway project area. The City adopted Mitigated Negative Declaration No. 29-03 analyzing the impacts of the proposed affordable housing project on Parcel 1 (Jamboree).

#### Cesar Chavez Elementary School Site

The Cesar Chavez Elementary School is currently in operation on the southwest corner of Maine Avenue and Third Avenue. Plans for the two-story, 800-student elementary school were approved in April 2002. The project was a joint effort between the City and the Long Beach Unified School District. An EIR was prepared by the City's Community and Environmental Planning Division titled "Broadway Golden Elementary School" (SCH No. 2001051107). The EIR concluded that impacts would be less than significant for all environmental parameters with the proposed mitigation implemented.

## 1.4 DEMAND FOR HOUSING IN THE CITY OF LONG BEACH

According to the June 2004 Housing Action Plan FY 2005-2009 (City of Long Beach Department of Community Development Housing Services Bureau), the demand for housing exceeds supply of housing statewide causing a housing shortage which impacts the price of housing. The situation in Long Beach in the 1990s to current day has shown that a 7.5 percent increase in population translating to a 2.6 percent household increase has occurred while less than a one percent increase occurred in the housing stock<sup>1</sup>.

There are over a dozen residential projects underway downtown of which the West Gateway project contributes a portion. It is anticipated that these units, which are predominately luxury units (except the Jamboree Parcel 1 that has affordable housing units), will be readily absorbed in the market.

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<sup>1</sup> Housing Action Plan FY 2005-2009 (City of Long Beach Department of Community Development Housing Services Bureau) Adopted June 2004, pp. 16.